

BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Lim, Lorraine and Oyama, Shinji (2014) Beyond conventional Western views of creativity and innovation. In: Bilton, C. and Cummings, S. (eds.) The Handbook of Management and Creativity. Elgar Original Reference. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, pp. 73-87. ISBN 9781781000892.

Downloaded from: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/8912/>

Usage Guidelines:

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html>
contact lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk.

or alternatively

Beyond conventional Western views of creativity and innovation
Lorraine Lim and Shinji Oyama

There is a long-held assumption that Asians are not creative. Books from scholars based in Asia with titles such as *Why Asians are Less Creative than Westerners* (Ng 2001) and *Can Asians Think?* (Mahbubani 2002) only seem to reinforce the stereotype that Asians are not as creative as their Western counterparts. This notion, however, has not stopped governments in Asia from investing heavily both financially and through myriad policies to support creativity and innovation across a range of industries within their nations. These initiatives range from promoting creativity through design, as exemplified by the newly established Singapore University of Technology and Design, to the Chinese government stimulating creativity in arts and culture by designating certain cities in China as ‘creative centres’ (Keane 2007). Other schemes include a variety of nation branding plans that are being implemented by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry in Japan and Korea’s highly successful support for local popular culture which has resulted in the so-called Korean Wave in East Asian countries (Chua and Iwabuchi 2008).

This drive towards being ‘creative’ is no doubt due to the belief that creativity is an essential component for any country’s economy where the significance of agriculture and manufacturing is in irreversible decline. In today’s knowledge economy, creativity has been identified as the ‘most potentially successful response for negotiating economic change’ and is now credited for everything ranging from ‘corporate innovation and technological advancement’ to the ‘rehabilitation of cities and advancing education and learning’ (Banaji et al. 2010: 41, Cherbo et al. 2010: 37). Therefore, creativity is what will allow countries and companies to stay competitive in the knowledge economy in which ideas will spur economic growth. If we are to understand that creativity is playing and will play a large role in driving economic growth, it stands to reason that a perceived lack of creativity in Asia hinders this very growth.

But are Asians really not creative?

This question is all the more urgent as we are beginning to see a rapidly changing power balance between the economies in Europe and America and countries in Asia. In the context of the shifts taking place in the world economy today, this chapter will first begin by highlighting how there is currently an inaccurate assumption that Asians are not creative. In doing so, it will then be possible to highlight a new way of thinking about Asia and its relationship with 'creativity'. We would then argue that what is occurring in reality is not that Asians are not creative but rather that creativity is distributed across national boundaries.

Is it true that Asia is not as creative as the West? One of the main reasons why this perception remains can perhaps be laid at the lack of understanding of what constitutes 'Asia' itself. A vast region, Asia contains countries such as Japan and Singapore, which have transformed themselves into countries with large service economies alongside countries such as Myanmar (or Burma) and Bangladesh, which are still dominated by agricultural industries. As a region, Asia possesses many countries that can be considered far more developed and creative than countries within the European Union (EU). This is borne out with figures from the *Global Innovation Index* (INSEAD and World Intellectual Property Organisation 2012), where Asian countries such as Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore make up the top 20 countries in the list alongside their North American and European counterparts such as the United States, Switzerland, Finland and Germany. Similarly, if one takes a casual look at the top 20 companies listed in terms of patents filed in the United States in 2011, the list is made up of 10 Japanese and 7 American companies followed by 2 Korean and 1 Taiwanese firm (IFI Claims Patent Services 2012). The first European entry, a German company, comes in at 30th position and there is not a single British company in the top 50. It is clear from these figures here that the current perceptions surrounding the supposed lack of creativity in Asia is not true. This continual belief, contrary to evidence, can best be explained by the concept of

Orientalism, which seeks to construct Asia as unchanging, homogeneous and inferior to the West. The slightly updated version of Imperialist Orientalism now constructs Asia as a machine-like factory that is only able to manufacture (or pirate) goods which have been invented by their enlightened and creative Western counterparts. This seems to be a desire embedded in Western consciousness that bears little or no resemblance to the reality today.

The aim of this chapter therefore does not seek to explain why creativity is lacking in Asia (it isn't). Furthermore, there already exist numerous studies that examine the lack of creativity in Asia within a historical and civilisational context. Academic literature that attempts to examine the role of 'innovation' and 'creativity' within the Asian setting often highlights how the continued adherence to 'Confucian' teachings and highly interventionist governments will continue to stymie the development of 'creativity' in Asian countries (see Hutton 2007). Researchers attempting to discover if creativity functions differently within a non-Western context have hypothesised that innovation has a stronger 'orientation towards useful/appropriate solutions in the East and a stronger orientation towards novel/original solutions in the West' (Morris and Leung 2010: 316). This difference, it is argued, comes from the ideas that traits such as conformity and collectivism closely linked to Confucianism result in innovations that are incremental and needs-oriented as these solutions build upon existing practices which allow for the continued maintenance of social bonds within a community. However, the degree of adherence to, and the adaption of, Confucianism varies greatly in countries in Asia and in itself does not explain the vast difference among companies within the same sector in Asia. This line of thinking also does not take into account the multinational investments in creativity and innovation in several research centres all over the world. Instead of speculating whether Asia is as creative as or more creative than the West, this chapter instead will argue that it is increasingly irrelevant to think of creativity and its geographical distribution on the old model of West and non-West or centre versus

periphery. By way of two case studies, we would like to argue that creativity is unevenly distributed across the putative line between West and non-West as well as within them and that this distribution is an effect of globalisation.

<a>GLOBALISATION AND CREATIVITY

The term globalisation is used here to highlight a break with the Eurocentric view that is implicit in the discourse on the lack of creativity in Asia. The key symptoms of globalisation as identified by sociologist John Tomlinson highlight key issues surrounding creativity in Asia.

First, cultural products from the West or the presence of Western companies in general no longer dominate the world. The presence of companies from the West in Asia is not as marked as it is believed in the West. Globalisation is a de-centralising process, and there is no longer an absolute centre, a role that the United States undoubtedly played in previous decades. Today the world has a number of sub-centres and regional hubs in the form of Tokyo, Hong Kong and Shanghai in Asia and cities such as Dubai, Cairo and Mexico City in other parts of the world. Not only has the Asian economy as a whole increased its share in global output, the Asian economy is also dependent on the intra-regional markets for capital and consumer goods, which have grown rapidly relative to the EU and North America. While Western tourists and journalists might selectively spot Western brands and cultural goods in Asian cities, it is the case that Asian consumers in particular display a preference for local cultural goods. This can be observed in areas ranging from popular music, magazines and television programmes to consumer brands.

The concepts of ‘cultural discount’ and ‘cultural proximity’ might explain these preferences. Cultural goods made for a certain culture usually have little appeal outside that culture because the cultural contents are unique to the culture of origin and often have little relevance to consumers outside the particular cultural sphere. For this reason, significant

cultural exports from Asia (mostly Japan) have been limited to products that are best described as ‘culturally odourless’. A term coined by Professor Iwabuchi Koichi,¹ ‘culturally odourless’ products are products that do not contain a cultural presence, thus allowing consumers to remain unaware of the origin of these products (Iwabuchi 2002: 27). He highlights the Sony Walkman as one such example where the ‘use of the Walkman does not evoke images or ideas of a Japanese lifestyle, even if consumers know it is made in Japan’ (Iwabuchi 2002: 28). This would explain why cultural goods such as video games, comics and cartoons do very well in Western markets. At the same time, companies operating within the creative industries in Asia are also aware that the Western market is one that is mature with many established players, making it difficult to penetrate due to a cultural discount. Therefore, creativity and innovation have been invested in meeting domestic and regional Asian needs and preferences rather than in attempting to break into the sluggish Western market. This makes ‘creative’ products difficult to spot for Western commentators and scholars. Consequently, most American and European audiences remain oblivious to some of the biggest film or pop stars in Asia.

Second, from a dialectical perspective, globalisation is more accurately characterised as a process of glocalisation (Robertson 1995), a generative process in which the continual interpenetration between global and local cultural and economic forms have created new hybrid structures. The local is always found in global elements and vice versa. Anthropologist Richard Wilk’s concept of global ‘structures of common difference’ (1995) is useful for explicating the key structural features for the geographical distribution of creativity and innovation. Global structures of difference organise and even promote cultural differences along specific dimensions. Thus globalisation is the hegemony of form but not of content, the latter which celebrates particular kinds of diversity while suppressing others. This means that there are small numbers of global forms through which creativity is exercised

and innovation takes place. Conceptions of creativity and innovation, which are strongly linked to the romantic notion of originality and individual authorship, must adjust to reflect this change. The fast food chain, an American concept, is one example whereby the global format has been localised and, through this structure, local innovation has flourished.

Using the examples of luxury cosmetics brands and popular culture in Asia, the next section of this chapter will elaborate on how these two effects of globalisation have led to the assumption that there is a lack of creativity in Asia. What must be made clear is that the aim of this chapter is not to show that there is a particular type of non-Western creativity (just as it is not possible to argue for a particular 'Western' creativity) but to broaden the current discourse of what can be considered creative and understand how it is no longer possible to understand the distribution of creativity along the national or civilisational lines of Asia. It is also important here to point out that while the term 'non-Western' is used, this does not imply that this term speaks for Asia as a whole. The two case studies under discussion are drawn from East Asia, which only represent a particular area; they were selected to demonstrate the issues being discussed in this chapter.

It is well known that markets in the West are not as readily receptive as markets in Asia in receiving cultural products from another part of the world. As highlighted earlier, what Western markets embrace in terms of cultural products from Asia are products where their own culture, be it American or European, can be placed onto the products, allowing for a seamless insertion into the local culture. Japanese manga characters are a case in point. While they might look 'Asian', the multi-coloured hairstyles, exaggerated facial features represent a non-race which allow for an easy translation onto Western screens. The examples in this section will illustrate that in order for these products to be popular in the West, the 'creative' origin of these products are usually hidden or masked as many products from East Asia do not translate easily to the West. Consequently, many consumers in the West are often

unaware of where these supposedly ‘innovative’ or ‘creative’ products come from, thus reinforcing the view that there only seems to be a one-directional flow of creative products from the West in Asia, which then further bolsters the perception that there are no creative products in Asia, leading to the final conclusion that there is a lack of creativity in Asia. The examples here will show that this flow of creativity is actually bi-directional due to globalisation but that the combined issues of market and language form two of the key reasons why this assumption still remains.

<a>HIDDEN ORIGINS OF CREATIVITY

Japan has the second largest cosmetics markets in the world. The impact of cosmetics brands from the West can be seen in luxury department stores in Tokyo today. If we were to map the spaces in terms of brands that are generally perceived to be from Tokyo or London, the following observations can be made. Of the 40 brands on the ground floor of Tokyo’s trend-setting Isetan department store in Shinjuku, 24 cosmetic brands originate from the West, with the remaining 11 brands being from Japan. In London’s Selfridges department store, the ratio becomes 32 brands from the West to 2 Japanese brands. Both in Tokyo and London, it is clear that the cosmetics industry is dominated by brands from Europe and America. Can this dominance be put down to the superiority of the type of cosmetics sold by Western brands? Can it be argued that the ability of Western brands to market their brands more effectively via their packaging, promotion and advertising to a global audience explains this success as well? Perhaps Japanese cosmetic brands cannot compete on a global market because they’re just not ‘creative’ enough in developing new products as well as packaging and promotion?

Brands are now arguably the most important corporate asset for brand-driven companies, where brand value can account for as much as 70 per cent of a company’s market value (Lindemann 2003: 29). Just like other intangible corporate assets, they are now legally protected as intellectual property and are exchanged in a global business-to-business market.

Recent decades have seen various forms of brand-driven economic exchange, which has subsumed many Japanese brands. In luxury cosmetics, merger mania has sent most major brands into the hands of a small number of powerful groups, including L'Oréal, Estée Lauder, Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessey (LVMH) or Shiseido, Japan's largest cosmetics manufacturer. The second transformation occurred with the introduction of brand licensing whereby the use of a brand by a brand owner is leased to another company in return for the payment of royalty fees (Perrier 1998: 104–13). All of the large groups take advantage of this more flexible form of brand exploitation to enhance their brand portfolio by forming partnerships with top fashion designers across national boundaries. One such brand that has adopted both these strategies is the world's largest cosmetics maker L'Oréal. Since the 1980s, L'Oréal has acquired the French brand Lancôme, the American brand Maybelline New York, the British brand The Body Shop and Chinese brands Mini Nurse and Yue-Sai, as well as the Japanese make-up brand shu uemura (Jones et al. 2006). In addition, L'Oréal has license agreements with the likes of Italian fashion designer Giorgio Armani and the American fashion brand Ralph Lauren. It now boasts a brand portfolio consisting of more than 20 brands from different continents. Estée Lauder and LVMH have equally large, although somewhat less multinational, portfolios. Likewise, Shiseido has acquired Western brands and developed brands in-house that do not bear the corporate Shiseido brand to bolster its portfolio. These acquired brands include three French brands: Carita, Decléor and Nars Cosmetics, and one American brand, Bare Escentuals. Shiseido also has a license agreement with high-profile French designer Jean-Paul Gaultier, Cuban-American fashion designer Narciso Rodriguez, and globally renowned Japanese fashion designer Miyake Issey (Jones et al. 2006).

What is key to the discussion about brands is that in any department store in any part of the world, the relationship between different brands within a single group, such as L'Oréal

brands or the Shiseido brands, remains invisible to ordinary consumers. A brand portfolio is developed to target different market segments, but it also enables multinational companies to adapt to varying kinds of cultural references in different markets. Multiple markets are particularly relevant to cosmetic brands as the business is directly related to historical constructions of cultural ideas such as beauty, youth, modernity, race and image of its country of origin. Therefore, while Japanese model Ebihara Yuri is the official face of Shiseido MAQuillage in most East Asian markets, Shiseido is Japanese only when it wants to be. The rest of the time, it is happy being Chinese, American, French or any other nationality. In East Asian department stores, where Japanese brands go a long way, Shiseido relies more on its corporate Shiseido brands. In contrast, it relies heavily on acquired Western brands in Western markets. In Selfridges London, it deploys Shiseido, but also Nars Cosmetics and Decl  r, as well as its licensed fragrance brands Jean-Paul Gaultier and Narcisco Rodriguez. Similarly, Japan's second largest cosmetics maker Kose and its Japanese subsidiary Albion are taking advantage of their multinational portfolio to a greater degree. While Albion has a number of domestic brands, its expansion in the Asian and Western market has been driven by four Western licensed brands: Anna Sui Cosmetics (licensed from American Chinese fashion designer Anna Sui); Sonia Rykiel Beaut   (licensed from French fashion brand Sonia Rykiel); Paul and Joe Beaut   (licensed from French fashion designer Paul and Joe); and Ladur  e (licensed from French luxury cakes and pastries). What these companies have done is to identify which brands will work within a specific market, tailor their products, packaging and promotion to each market, reaffirming not only cultural assumptions of beauty, race and youth, but at the same time 'masking' where these products are actually from or who they are created by.

This same 'masking' also occurs when it comes to Asian popular culture. Consumers in America are often unaware that some of the most critically and financially successful films

made in Hollywood are based on creative ideas that originate from Asia. Filmmakers in the West ‘mask’ the creative origin of their films, in the same way that their counterparts in cosmetics do as well, to present familiar cultural references to their consumers of which the use of the English language is of paramount importance. American movie audiences are notoriously known for their dislike of subtitled films and the language barrier is a key reason that prevents many films made in Asia from crossing over to the West and Europe. This resistance to watching subtitled films has led to many Asian film rights being bought by American film production companies and transformed into Westernised versions with many audience members unaware of the creative origin of the film. Some notable examples include films such as Korean film *Il Mare*, which would become *The Lake House* starring Sandra Bullock and Keanu Reeves, as well as *The Departed*, directed by Martin Scorsese based on the Hong Kong film *Infernal Affairs*. This is not a trend that has gone unnoticed with Hollywood’s industry magazine *Variety*, reporting that Hollywood is ‘looking to China more than ever, not just as a place to sell things, but as a source of inspiration’ (Jones 2005: 74). What must also be remembered is that this is by no means a new phenomenon, while many American and European audiences might not be familiar with the work of Kurosawa Akira; it is unlikely that they would not recognise the film *The Magnificent Seven*, made in 1960, which is based on Kurosawa’s *The Seven Samurai*. This trend in re-making films from Asia into Western versions, erasing any cultural references that reference the creative origin of the films, continues to reinforce the assumption that nothing ‘creative’ comes from Asia.

One of the consequences of this language barrier is that directors from America and Europe are able to appropriate visual elements from films in Asia, creating iconic images or visual sequences by once again masking the creative origin of the image. These images are then re-translated and presented into these films as if they were ‘new’. No one has accused Quentin Tarantino of being unoriginal for dressing Uma Thurman in a yellow tracksuit in *Kill*

Bill Vol. 1 (see Pang 2006). The Wachowski brothers borrow heavily from Hong Kong action film genres in *The Matrix Trilogy*, by hiring Hong Kong martial arts choreographer Yuen Woo-Ping to choreograph the fight sequences in the film. What these examples listed above have shown is that the perception that Asia is not creative because it does not produce cultural products that are as globally successful as their Western counterparts is one that cannot stand if we examine the bi-directional flow of creativity between the West and Asia more closely. The global success of films such as *The Matrix* would not have been possible without the debt it had to action films from Hong Kong.

<a>MULTIPLE CREATORS, MULTIPLE MARKETS

The flow of creativity can no longer be seen along the lines of West or non-West. What we have now is an increasingly geographical entanglement of creativity that is able to flourish due to a global marketing, production and distribution chain. This chain allows for Paul and Joe's French founder and designer Sophie Albou to work with a team of Japanese creatives in Albion in designing and operating the successful cosmetics line, and for Western directors to increasingly draw inspiration from Asian films and popular culture. What is also possible to demonstrate with the growing bi-directional flow of creativity around the world is that it is no longer possible to think of creativity coming from one person or one 'genius' creator. Rather the creation of a successful product, be it cosmetics or a film, comes about when different people work together, drawing on each other in the form of financial resources, research facilities or being inspired by various elements such as visual iconography or musical styles.

L'Oréal has invested heavily in its research and innovation centre in Japan, making it Asia's biggest research facility. There the company is able to tap into Japan's advanced technologies in biology, environmental and material science, which has resulted in the creation of a type of cosmetic product that does not wear off in the sun. This product is based on a material that is used to maintain a car's exterior in severe weather conditions (Gaishikei

2012). With the following statement, ‘I need a rich patron to continue with my creations and L’Oreal is playing the role of my Medici family very nicely,’ make-up artist Uemura Shu quips that L’Oréal’s financial resources are a reason why he is able to continue to innovate (Uemura in Watson 2008). Once again, this highlights the fact that creation does not come from a singular entity but also requires a mix of resources, be they financial or technological. Currently, companies that possess these financial resources or control the international marketing and distribution chain are largely based, or are seen to be based, in the West, thus reinforcing the image that these products are created in America or Europe. However, companies in Asia are beginning to make their presence felt. This is most keenly seen in today’s mobile telecommunications market, where South Korean company Samsung Group as well as HTC, a Chinese company, have managed to establish a significant market share with their mobile phones. Both these companies are challenging the dominance of Apple iPhones in a way that Finnish company Nokia has been unable to do. Samsung Group and HTC might just be the start of a list of Asian companies that could come to dominate the international distribution chain in the near future.

Within the pop music industry in Asia, the exposure to Western influences via films and music from the West have resulted in the incorporation of musical genres from Europe and America such as rhythm and blues (R&B) and hip-hop to create new hybridised musical styles. Jay Chou, a Taiwanese pop star, is one such singer who ‘performs in a rhythm and blues style, but within this Western form ... has inserted Chinese melodies, themes and rhythms’ (Fung 2008: 72). With Chou’s songs, we can see how the global format of a pop song has been localised to incorporate musical elements familiar to listeners in Asia to create new content within a globally recognised format. Cantonese pop songs, popularly known as Cantopop, have been described as a ‘unique and often bewildering mixture of Chinese, other Asian and Western elements’ and are another example (Witzleben 1999: 241). Hong Kong

Cantopop singer Anita Mui's song *Yuan Jinxiao Yiqi Zuisi* (I Want to Die of Intoxication Together Tonight) is an exemplification of this mix:

<quotation>The song is a cover of the Japanese song *Ueo Muite Aruko* (Look up When I Walk), marketed in the West as *Sukiyaki*. Anita Mui's version is performed at a slow tempo similar to a later 1970s English-language version by A Taste of Honey, with the addition of touches of Japonism in the form of synthesised koto (or, more precisely, a Hong Kong iconisation of koto sounds) and a whispered 'sayonara' as the record fades. The song appeared on an album sung in Cantonese and recorded in Hong Kong but entitled, for no obvious reasons, *Anita in Brasil* (Witzleben 1999: 246).</quotation>

This one song alone references a variety of musical styles drawn from all over the world, creating a song that can only be described as a musical hybrid, which still functions within a recognisable pop song. What this song also does is highlight the need to start thinking of creativity in a different way, whereby new content is not the result of the work of one person but rather a bringing together of ideas from all over the world, resulting in something new.

We had earlier argued that globalisation is a de-centralising process where there is no longer a fixed centre. Rather, there are now multiple different hubs situated in various cities in the world. We also highlighted that the growth of economies in Asia has resulted in a more affluent society in Asia and many companies in Asia view Asian consumers as a largely untapped potential market, bypassing markets in the West. Japanese products are highly popular in East and Southeast Asia and circulate across the region via numerous legal, illegal, online and offline media channels. In cosmetics, Japan has influenced the region's make-up and skincare trends and regimens and has produced a regional craze for products such as whitening creams and anti-ageing serums that are quite specific to Asian skin types and aspirations (L'Oréal 2012). Japan's cute and girlish aesthetic has become a regional

phenomenon and companies are seeking to draw on these ideas in order to understand and adapt their products to the Asian regional markets.

A substantial market also exists in Asia for cultural goods. Even before the economic growth of China, there has always been a local and Asian-wide market for popular music in China as evidenced by Witzleben's article on Anita Mui. He argues that Hong Kong music fans had always preferred their own 'indigenous or domesticated heroines rather than imported ones' (1999: 244). He highlights how in 1995, American rock group R.E.M. played in a smallish venue to an 'overwhelmingly Western' audience leading singer Michael Stipe to dedicate a song during his concert to the 'local people, if there are any of you here' (Witzleben 1999: 245). At the same time, Anita Mui played 14 concerts to 'near-capacity crowds at the 12,500 seat Hong Kong Coliseum' (Witzleben 1999: 244). Within Asia, pop stars from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan record their songs in multiple languages because of the availability of the different markets within Asia. Due to this potential, there is little desire for these artists to record in English for the Western market. While their film counterparts seek a foothold in America, 'pop singers have remained seemingly indifferent to internationalism beyond China and Japan' (Witzleben 1999: 252). This is not saying that music from American or European bands are not successful in Asia; however, many Asian pop stars and bands are just as, or even more, popular in Asia.

The growing demand of all sorts for products from the increasingly affluent Chinese in recent years has resulted in a shift in the market for products in the region. This shift can be seen in the career of pop star Faye Wong (who might be more popularly known in the West for starring in many of Hong Kong director Wong Kar Wai's films). Originally from China, her early albums were all sung in Cantonese, as that was where the market was for popular music. It was only after releasing her sixth album that she recorded in Mandarin. She would continue to record both in Cantonese and her native language of Mandarin before

going into semi-retirement in 2005. She is not the exception; the popularisation of Japanese pop songs in Asia was due to ‘a large number of Chinese’ (Mandarin and Cantonese) versions of these songs made by ‘Taiwanese and Hong Kong artists’ (Ng 2003: 6). In fact, Wong’s first successful single was a cover of a Japanese song. The result of this intra-regional market is that Hong Kong pop stars would be famous in Japan, giving successful concerts in Japan or having ‘Japanese fans of Hong Kong pop fly to visit their icons or attend concerts’ (Ng 2003: 13). This worked for Japanese pop stars and groups as well, with many of them having fan clubs in Taiwan and Singapore. What is clear from both these examples is that there is a circulation of creativity manifested in the marketing of cosmetics or in pop music within Asia. However, due to a language barrier and growing market consumption, now boosted with China, there was, and still is, little desire to promote these products or artists beyond Asia. However, just because these products or singers are not well known globally does not indicate that there is no creativity in Asia.

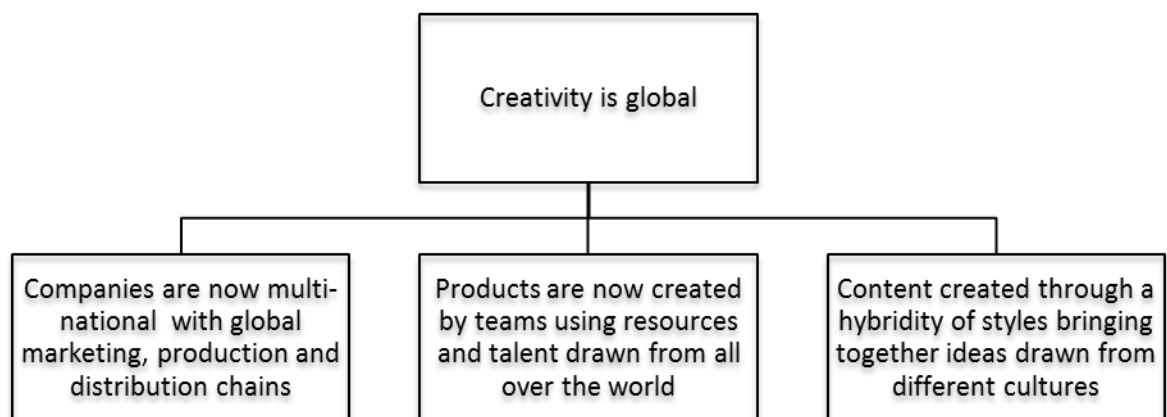


Figure 5.1 Global distribution of ‘creativity’

<a>CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to determine if the idea that Asians were not creative was a valid assumption. It raised questions about the ways in which the notion of creativity is discussed within current discourse and highlights that the effects of globalisation coupled with the current shift in the global economy requires a re-thinking of the notion of where creativity comes from. The examples taken from cosmetics and popular culture in Asia sought to highlight that there is now a bi-directional flow of creativity, which is often hidden to consumers in the West due to an unawareness of the creative origin of these products and a language barrier. In short, creativity is distributed across national boundaries.

For many years now, the export of goods and services has largely flowed from the West into Asia, but the growing affluence of countries in Asia such as China and India has seen a change in the global market economy. This shift within Asia and between the West can perhaps be best demonstrated with Hong Kong actor Jackie Chan's film *The Karate Kid*. Having successfully negotiated a shift to America, this film has him firmly back in China. The original film was set in Japan and has now been remade for a Chinese audience, thus demonstrating a significant shift in the importance of China as a growing consumer market for cultural goods. Another change that is taking place within Asia is that not only are firms such as Microsoft, Pfizer and Exxon increasing their investment in research and development in East Asia, but also that companies and governments in Asia are now exploring the potential of developing research and innovation with each other, instead of seeking a European or American partner. Singapore's Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) has recently announced a partnership with China's largest search engine Baidu to develop speech recognition technology platforms for use within Southeast Asia (Ho 2012). What the results of this partnership will mean in the future for the development of consumer technologies for Asia, and globally, might not be known in the near future, but this

collaboration perhaps demonstrates a confidence within Asia on their ability to create and innovate.

With the examples presented in this chapter, it is no longer possible to state that Asians are not creative due to their culture or government systems. If this assumption rests on the argument that Asia is not creative because the goods that it produces, invents or creates are not well known or consumed globally, this raises a more interesting question about how creative other parts of the world are. What has arisen from this chapter is perhaps the need to question why there has been a continued fascination with or fixation on the perceived lack of creativity in Asia, while inventions and cultural products from many other countries in the world are also not well known globally.

<a>QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

<nl>1. The Asian region now accounts for one-third of the world economy and possesses the world's two fastest growing economies, China and India. What do you think the impact of this growth will be on the creation, production and distribution of cultural products in the near future?

2. Are some countries/cultures/civilisations more creative than others? If so, what makes some more creative than others? Is this going to change or stay the same over a period of time? How do these perceptions relate to our definitions of creativity?

3. Does the concept of 'authenticity' have any value in the evaluation or appreciation of creativity in a contemporary globalised world? If it does, what makes something authentic, or inauthentic?

4. Should we use companies rather than nations when we think about creativity in a globalised economy?</nl>

<A> NOTE

¹ All Japanese and Chinese names in this chapter will be presented with the surname first, followed by their given names. The only exception will be when these names are registered trademarks in their own right, such as the case of cosmetic brands shu uemura.

<a>REFERENCES

Banaji, S., A. Burn and D. Buckingham (2010), *The rhetorics of creativity: a literature review*, 2nd edition. London: Creativity, Culture and Education.

Cherbo, L. and H.L. Vogel (2010), 'Recognition and artistic creativity,' in H. Anheier and Y.R. Isar (eds) *Cultural Expression, Creativity and Innovation*, London: Sage Publications, pp. 37–46.

Chua, B-H. and K. Iwabuchi (2008), *East Asian pop culture: analysing the Korean wave*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Fung, A. (2008), 'Western style, Chinese pop: Jay Chou's rap and hip-hop in China', *Asian Music*, **39**(1), Winter/Spring, 69–80.

Gaishikei Kigyō Nihon Ni Kenkyū Kaihatsu Kyoten Wo Shinsetsu Suru Ugoki: Haikei Ni Ajia Sijō No Kakudai in *Mainichi Shinbun*: Japan ['Western companies to develop research facilities in Japan to capitalize growing Asian markets'. Mainichi Newspaper online edition]
<http://mainichi.jp/select/today/news/20120306k0000m020054000c.html> [Accessed 30 May 2012]

Ho, V. (2012), 'Baidu taps A*STAR, researching SE-A languages here', *The Business Times*, 27 July.

Hutton, W. (2007), *The writing on the wall: why we must embrace China as a partner or face it as an enemy*, London: Little Brown

IFI Claims Patent Services (2012), *IFI claims 2011 top 50 US patent assignees*. Madison,

CT: Fairview Research <http://ificlaims.com/index.php?page=misc_Top_50_2011>

[Accessed 29 September 2012].

INSEAD and World Intellectual Property Organisation (2012), *Global Innovation Index 2012: stronger innovation linkages for global growth*. Fontainebleau, France: INSEAD.

Iwabuchi, K. (2002), *Recentering globalisation: popular culture and Japanese Transnationalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Jones, A. (2005), 'Jumping the Great Wall', *Variety Magazine*, 16–22 May, 74.

Jones, G., D. Kiron, V. Dessain and A. Sioman (2006), 'L'Oréal and the globalization of American beauty', in *Harvard Business School case studies*, Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing.

Keane, M. (2007), *Created in China: the great leap forward*, London: Routledge.

L'Oreal Japan Corporate Communication Department (2012), 'Nihon L'Oreal R&D Wo 25 per cent Kakuju, 3 Bumon Wo Aratani Sousetsu', in *L'Oreal: Japan* <<http://prtimes.jp/data/corp/3480/750a57e5992b23c842773e6ff07612d2.pdf>> [Accessed 27 July 2012].

Lindemann, J. (2003), 'The financial value of brands', in P. Barwise and R. Clifton (eds) *Brands and branding*, London: The Economist, pp. 27–46.

Mahbubani, K. (2001), *Can Asians think? Understanding the divide between East and West*, South Royalton, VT: Steerforth Press.

Morris, M. and K. Leung (2010), 'Creativity East and West: perspectives and parallels', *Management and Organisation Review*, **6**(3), 313–27.

Ng, A.K. (2000), *Why Asians are less creative than westerners*, London: Prentice Hall.

Ng, B.W-M. (2003), 'Japanese popular music in Singapore and the hybridization of Asian music', *Asian Music*, **34**(1), Autumn/Winter, 1–18.

Pang, L. (2006) *Cultural control and globalisation in Asia: copyright, piracy and cinema*,

London and New York: Routledge.

Perrier, R. (1998), 'Brand licensing', in S. Hart and J. Murphy (eds) *Brands: the new wealth creators*, London: Macmillan.

Robertson, R. (1995), 'Glocalisation: time-space and homogeneity-heterogeneity', in M.

Featherstone, S. Lash and R. Robertson (eds) *Global modernities*, London: Sage

Publications, pp. 25–44.

Watson, L. (2008), 'Shu Uemura: creator of a global cosmetics brand', *The Independent*, 27

February, 36.

Wilk, R. (1995), 'Learning to be local in Belize: global systems of common difference', in D.

Miller (ed.) *Worlds apart: modernity through the prism of the local*, London:

Routledge, pp. 110–33.

Witzleben, J.L. (1999), 'Cantopop and Mandapop in pre-postcolonial Hong Kong: identity

negotiation in the performances of Anita Mui Yim-Fong', *Popular Music*, **18**(2),

May, 241–58.